

Asheville City Council
Planning and Economic Development Committee

3:30 p.m., April 16, 2008
Economic Development Office Conference Room

Minutes

Present: Councilwoman Robin Cape, Chair; Vice Mayor Jan Davis; Staff Members: Sam Powers, Gary Jackson, Nikki Gunter; Sasha Vrtunski, Downtown Master Plan Project Coordinator

Guests: Patti Torno, River District Design Review Committee; Kate O'Hara, Land-of-Sky Regional Council of Governments

The Planning and Economic Development Committee met on April 16, 2008 at 29 Haywood Street at 3:30pm. Chair Robin Cape called the meeting to order.

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting, held March 12, were approved as written.

2. Presentations

None.

3. Updates

Downtown Master Plan

Sasha Vrtunski, Project Manager for the Downtown Master Plan, gave the Update. To date, the process has involved representatives from consulting firm Goody Clancy, Inc., meeting with 72-74 Asheville area residents representing a wide scope of interests. The first public workshop will be held on May 8, at the Civic Center and then on May 15, a local panel will present a history of downtown. Both Chair Cape and Vice Mayor Davis expressed their hope that the May 8th workshop be advertised as widely as possible, and that every effort is made to assure participation by those folks who might not normally attend such an event. Suggestions were made including, but not limited to: information about the workshop on the City Channel both before and after reruns of Council meetings; a lunchtime show on WLOS; radio interviews of Goody Clancy representatives; special invitations sent to the UNCA Senior Center, Leadership Asheville and Rotary Clubs; and free parking at the Civic Center parking deck. Ms. Vrtunski will work to implement these suggestions.

At Vice Mayor Davis' request, Ms. Vrtunski then clarified the role of the Advisory Committee in the Downtown Master Plan process. The Advisory Committee is a group of about 30 who will work with the consultants and staff, giving feedback and being used as a sounding board. Another responsibility will be to network

throughout the Asheville community, to their constituencies. After reviewing the members of the Advisory Committee, it was suggested that Ms. Vrtunski explore the possibility of adding additional downtown retail experience to the committee membership. Vice Mayor Davis requested that the Advisory Committee roster, with contact information, be sent to all Council members.

4. Old Business

Board of Adjustment (BOA) Communication and Procedures

At the February 13 PED meeting, staff was directed to: (1) research how the City might improve public awareness of the Board of Adjustment's appeal process, and (2) solicit BOA consideration of the process and procedure changes proposed. Mr. Jackson presented a memorandum addressing these two directives (see attached). Chair Cape and Vice Mayor Davis agreed that a next step would be for Mr. Oast prepare a disclaimer, that the BOA is a quasi-judicial process, that you can represent yourself or be represented by a lawyer and that appeals from decisions of the City's administrative staff must be filed within 30 days of the contested action. They also suggested that a description of the role of the BOA be easily available on the website, what their domain is, and give options for resolving issues without going through the BOA (examples of alternate paths would be to contact the Neighborhood Coordinator, the Planning Director or the City Manager).

A date has not yet been set for the BOA retreat.

Economic Development Initiatives

Sam Powers explained that the Office of Economic Development is actively working with numerous other regional organizations and networks to build quality, connected places to attract and retain our people, jobs, investment and innovative businesses. The OED business model works in collaboration with AdvantageWest, CarolinaWest, the Land-of-Sky Regional Council of Governments, the Economic Development Coalition for Asheville-Buncombe County, the Asheville Chamber of Commerce, the HUB project and other agencies to "link and leverage" approaches to meet city strategic goals and to achieve regional economic development success. The City has utilized these organizations in key components such as business recruitment, retention and expansion, financial assistance/access to capital, workforce development, entrepreneurship development and technical assistance. The City has concentrated on product development, based on the strategic operating plan and the 2025 Plan. The HUB Project has retained a consultant to study the overall EDO, which should be released in two months.

PED also continued discussion from the City Council meeting concerning encouraging smart development along the River District. During the discussion Mr. Jackson noted that there were many competing economic projects and he would appreciate some direction on how to process with the budget upcoming. PED was provided a copy of the HCD Notes from CDBG Allocations Process, March 11 & 13, 2008

which noted several outside agency requests for funding. After discussion pertaining to the questions and opportunities related to the River District and other funding requests, **PED directed Mr. Jackson to prepare a budget targeting the opportunity to establish a staff position dedicated to the River District. Vice Mayor Davis also made the motion to recommend to City Council to that we partner with the County to establish a River District Commission and that we will commit resources in tandem.** Approved unanimously.

5. New Business

None.

6. Public Comment

None

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.